



SON OF THE REPUBLIC: LOOK AND LEARN!

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

About one year ago during my inquiries into the history of the American Revolution, I stumbled upon an old written account of *"Washington's Vision"*. The remarkable nature of this account compelled me to look further into the historical details of the revolutionary era in which it occurred, and the Civil War era in which it was recorded and published. Due to the nearly miraculous nature of this account, it has widely been refuted as a forgery, but upon further examination I noticed a number of details that indicated a possibility that this story may be a genuine historical account. In this article I will be sharing the earliest published account of *"Washington's Vision"* from *"The Philadelphia Inquirer"* published on June 24th 1861 [\[1\]](#). So far as I am aware, the original transcript of this version has not yet been made freely available to the public. In light of this, I will present my transcript of the original article without comment, and afterwards will provide a historical commentary that will elucidate several reasons that we have to believe this story is a true historical account. The images provided inline with the story are my own additions, and are meant to provide a visual context to help the reader visualize various aspects of the story. I will now offer my transcription of *"Washington's Vision"* and will reserve the historical analysis until after the full

publication of the text. The original publication is available in various formats in the Bibliography.

*A TRANSCRIPTION OF "WASHINGTON'S VISION" FROM THE
PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER - JUNE 24 1861*

BY WESLEY BRADSHAW

"The last time I ever saw ANTHONY SHERMAN was on the Fourth of July, 1859, in Independence Square. He was then ninety-[one/nine] and becoming very feeble; but though so old his dimming eyes kindled as he looked at Independence Hall, which, he said, he had come to gaze upon once more before he was garnered home."



(Independence Hall : Philadelphia Pennsylvania PA)

"What time is it?" said he, raising his trembling eyes to the clock in the steeple, and endeavored to shade the former with a shaking hand, what time is it? I can't see so well now as I used to."

"Half past three."

"Come, then," he continued, "let us go into the Hall; I want to tell you an incident of WASHINGTON'S it's - one which no one alive knows of except

myself, and if you live, you will, before long, see it verified. Mark me, I am not superstitious, but you will see it verified."



(Independence Hall : Philadelphia, Pennsylvania PA - Liberty Bell (Left) Assembly Room Interior (Right))

Reaching the visitors' room, in which the old relics of our early days are preserved, we sat down upon one of the old fashioned wooden benches, and my venerable friend relayed to me the following singular narrative which, from the peculiarity of our national affairs at the present time, I have been induced to give to the world. I give it, as nearly as possible, in his own words:"

"When the bold action of our Congress, in asserting the independence of the colonies, became known in the world, we were laughed and scoffed at as silly, presumptuous rebels, whom British grenadiers would soon tame into submission; but undauntedly, we prepared to make good what we had said. The keen encounter came, and the world knows the result. It is easy and pleasant for those of the present generation to talk and write of the days of Seventy-six, but they little know - neither can they imagine - the trials and sufferings of those fearful days. And there is one thing that I much fear, and that is, that the American people do not properly appreciate the boon of freedom. Party spirit is yearly becoming stronger and stronger, and unless it is checked, will, at no distant day, undermine and tremble into ruins the noble structure of the Republic. But let me hasten to my narrative."

"From the opening of the Revolution we experienced all phases of fortune-now good and now ill, at the time victorious, and another

Encampment.
(15)
(VALLEY FORGE)
1778

Schuylkill River

Locations marked on the map include: Pott, Scott, Hays, Buel, Mifflin, and various other encampments and forts.

4

(Artistic Depictions of General Washington in Prayer at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania)

“One day - I remember it well - the chilly wind whistled and howled through the leafless trees, though the sky was cloudless and the sun shining brightly - he remained in his quarters nearly the whole of the afternoon, alone. When he came out I realized that his face was a shade paler than usual, and that there seemed to be something on his mind of more than ordinary importance. Returning just after dusk, he despatched an orderly to the quarters of the officer I mentioned, who was presently in attendance. After a preliminary conversation, which lasted some half an hour, WASHINGTON, gazing up at his companion with that single look of dignity which he alone could command, said to the later:”



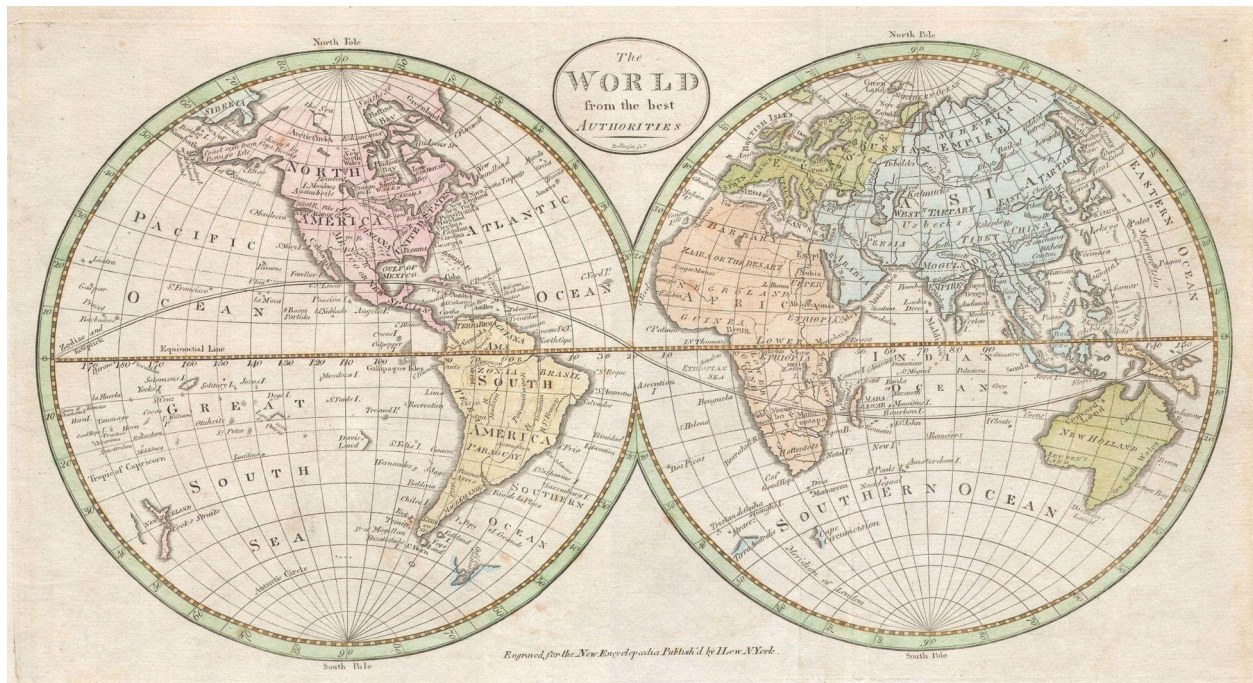
(Washington's Headquarters : Valley Forge, Pennsylvania)

“I did not know where it was owing to the anxiety of mind, or what, but this afternoon, as I was sitting at this very table, engaged in preparing a despatch, something in the apartment began to disturb me. Looking up, I beheld standing exactly opposite me, a singularly beautiful female. So astonished was I - for I had given strict orders not to be disturbed - that it was some moments before I found language to inquire the cause of her presence. A second, third, and even a fourth time did I repeat the question,

but received no answer from my mysterious visitor except a slight raising of the eyes."

"By this time I felt a strange sensation spreading through me. I would have risen, but the riveted gaze of the being before me rendered volition impossible. I essayed once more to address her, but my tongue had become paralyzed. A new influence, mysterious, potent, irresistible, took possession of me. All I could do was to gaze steadily vacantly, at my unknown visitant. Gradually, the surrounding atmosphere seemed as though becoming filled with sensations, and grew luminous. Everything about me appeared to rarify, the mysterious visitor herself becoming more airy, and yet even more distinct to my sight than before. I now began to feel as one dying, or rather, to experience the sensations which I have sometimes imagined accompany dissolution. I did not think, I did not reason, I did not move; all were alike impossible. I was only conscious of gazing, fixedly, vacantly, at my companion."

"Presently, I heard a voice saying. 'Son of the Republic, look and learn!' while, at the same time my visitor extended her arm and forefinger eastwardly I now beheld a heavy white vapor at some distance, rising fold upon fold. This gradually dissipated, and I looked upon a strange scene. Before me lay stretched out in one vast plain all the countries of the world - Europe, Asia, Africa and America. I saw rolling and tossing between Europe and America the billows of the Atlantic, and between Asia and America lay the Pacific. 'Son of the Republic' said the same mysterious voice as before, 'look and learn!'."



(1798 Payne Map of the World)

“At that moment I beheld a dark, shadowy, being like an angel, standing, or rather floating, in mid-air between Europe and America. Dipping water out of the ocean in the holloy of each hand, he sprinkled some upon America with his right hand, while he cast upon Europe some with his left. Immediately, a dark cloud arose from each of these countries and joined in mid-ocean. For a while it remained stationary, and then moved slowly westward, until it enveloped America in its murky fold. Sharp flashes of lightning now gleamed throughout it at intervals, and I heard the smothered groans and cries of the American people.”

“A second time the angel dipped from the ocean, and sprinkled it out as before. The dark cloud was then drawn back to the ocean, into whose heaving waves it sunk from view. A third time I heard the mysterious voice, saying, “Son of the Republic, look and learn.”

“ ‘I cast my eyes upon America, and beheld villages, towns, and cities springing up one after another, until the whole land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific was dotted with them. Again I heard the mysterious voice say, “son



of the Republic, the end of a century cometh - “look and learn.”

(“American Progress” - John Gast 1872)

“ ‘At this the dark, shadowy angel turned his face southward, and from Africa I saw an ill-omened spectator approaching our land. It flitted slowly and heavily over every village, town, and city of the latter, the inhabitants of which hereby set themselves into battle array, one against the other. As I continued looking, I saw a bright angel, on whose brow rested a crown of light, on which was traced the word UNION, bearing the American flag, which was placed between the divided nations, and said: - “Remember, ye are brethren!”

“ ‘Instantly, the inhabitants, casting from them their weapons, became friends once more, and united around the national standard. And again I heard the mysterious voice, saying “Son of the Republic, the second peril is passed - look and learn.”

“ ‘And I beheld the villages, towns, and cities of America increase in size and numbers till at last they covered all the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and their inhabitants became as countless as the stars in Heaven, or as the sand on the sea shore. And again I heard the mysterious voice, saying, ‘Son of the Republic, the end of a century cometh - look and learn”

“ ‘At this, the dark, shadowy angel placed a trumpet to his mouth and blew three distinct blasts, and taking water from the ocean, sprinkled it upon Europe, Asia and Africa.”

“ ‘Then my eyes looked upon a fearful scene - From each of those countries arose thick, black clouds, which soon joined into one; and throughout this mass gleamed a dark-red light, by which I saw hordes of armed men, who moving with the cloud, marched by land and sailed by sea to America, which country was presently enveloped in the volume of the cloud. And I dimly saw these vast armies devastate the whole country, and pillage and burn villages, cities and towns, that I had beheld springing up.”

“As my ears listened to the thundering of canon, clashing of swords and shouts and cries of the millions in mortal combat, I again heard the mysterious voice, saying, “Son of the Republic, look and learn.”

“ ‘When the voice had ceased, the dark, shadowy angel placed his trumpet to his mouth and blew a long, fearful blast.”

“ ‘Instantly a light, as from a thousand suns, shone down from above me, and pierced and broke into fragments the dark cloud which enveloped America. At the same moment I saw the angel upon whose forehead solely shone the word UNION, and who bore our national flag in one hand and a sword in the other, descend from Heaven, attended by legions of bright spirits. These immediately joined the inhabitants of America, who I perceived, were well nigh overcome, but who, immediately taking courage again closed up their broken ranks and renewed the battle. Again, amid the

fearful noise of the conflict, I heard the mysterious voice, saying, "Son of the Republic, look and learn."

" 'As the voice ceased, the shadowy angel, for the last time, dipped water from the ocean and sprinkled it upon America. Instantly the dark cloud rolled back, together with the armies it had brought, leaving the inhabitants of the land victorious. Then once more I beheld the villages, towns, and cities, springing up where they had been before, while the bright angel, planting the Azure standard he had brought in the midst of them, cried in a loud voice to the inhabitants:- "While the stars remain, and the heavens send down dew upon the earth, so long shall the Republic last!"

" 'And taking from his brow the crown, on which still blazed the word UNION, he placed it upon the standard, while all the people, kneeling down said, "Amen!" " ' The scene instantly began to fade and dissolve, and I at last saw nothing but the rising, curling white vapor I had first beheld. This also disappearing, I found myself once more gazing upon my mysterious visitor. Who, in that same mysterious voice I had heard before, said: - "Son of the Republic, what you have seen is thus interpreted: three perils will come upon the Republic. The most fearful is the second, passing which, the whole world united shall never be able to prevail against her. Let every child of the Republic learn to live for his God, his Land, and Union!"

" 'With these words the figure vanished. I started from my seat, and felt that I had been shown the birth, progress, and destiny of the Republic of the United States. In Union she will have strength, in Disunion her destruction.'"

"Such, my friend," concluded the venerable narrator, "were the words I heard from WASHINGTON's own lips, and America will do well to profit by them. Let her remember that in Union she has strength, in Disunion her destruction."

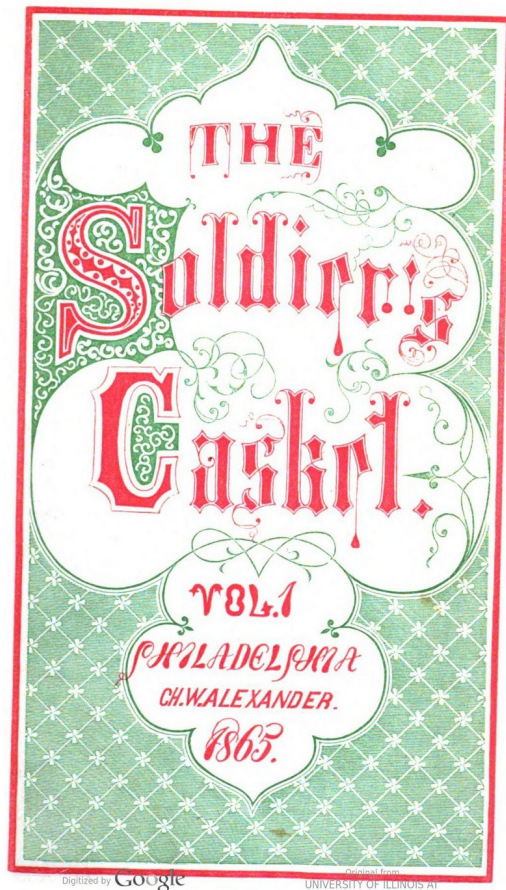
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CONCERNING WESLEY BRADSHAW

This article was published in the days leading up the major conflicts of the Civil War by a "Charles Wesley Alexander", writing under his pen-name "Wesley Bradshaw" (referenced as "Wesley" in this paper). Due to the remarkable contents of the article,

including an accurate prediction of the outcome of the Civil War, amongst other similarly remarkable materials published by Wesley; some have dismissed this story as a forgery [18]. As of yet, there have only been partial attempts to affirm or deny the plausibility of claims made by Wesley in his article. Owing to the general skepticism concerning Religious experience that has inundated the modern era, the following analysis will attempt to demonstrate all of the reasons that we have to believe that the story of *“Washington’s Vision”* may be a generally credible historical account. Before analyzing the text itself, we would do well to examine more closely the character and conduct of Wesley, and the reasons he may have had for publishing this remarkable account under a pen-name.

Whatever Wesley’s detractors may accuse him of, his contemporaries would be in agreement on the fact that he was an American Patriot. In his various published works, many of which are portrayed as factual historical accounts, he consistently demonstrates a high regard for the legacy and heritage of his country. He did this in a number of collected stories of under-published events in the Civil War and Revolutionary Era. Wesley, as a prominent writer of his day with access to newspaper and book publishers, would have certainly attracted an audience of patriotic individuals who had unique personal stories to tell, and perhaps desired to see them published. In the Civil War era, the primary means of mass communication was through newspapers. Writers like Wesley with popular works were “stars” of their own time, and like a magnet, attracted many interesting people with unique stories. This explains why many of Wesley’s stories are unique and uncorroborated by other works.



SOLDIERS, WRITE FOR THE CASKET: ITS PAGES ARE ALWAYS OPEN TO YOU.

INTRODUCTION.

AMIDST the thousands of books and journals to which the War and its necessities have given life, not one has been wholly devoted to the interests, instruction, and entertainment of our Volunteers. Every religious sect has its *Repository* or its *Advocate*; every political association has its organ; every trade or science has its journal; every celebrated General or noted politician has his biographer; while the War itself has hosts of historians.

But, from the time that WEBSTER LADD turned his dying gaze upon the Starry Banner for which he was the first to fall, a million of noble-hearted heroes have fought and suffered, with no other reward than the proud consciousness that they did so for their country. To fill this gap—to close up this break in the line of American literature—we have issued THE SOLDIER'S CASKET, the main objects of which are—

First. To record, authentically, the name, company, regiment, &c., of any Volunteer who has performed, or who may perform, a gallant or praiseworthy deed in behalf of his country, and also to give a full and correct detail of the same.

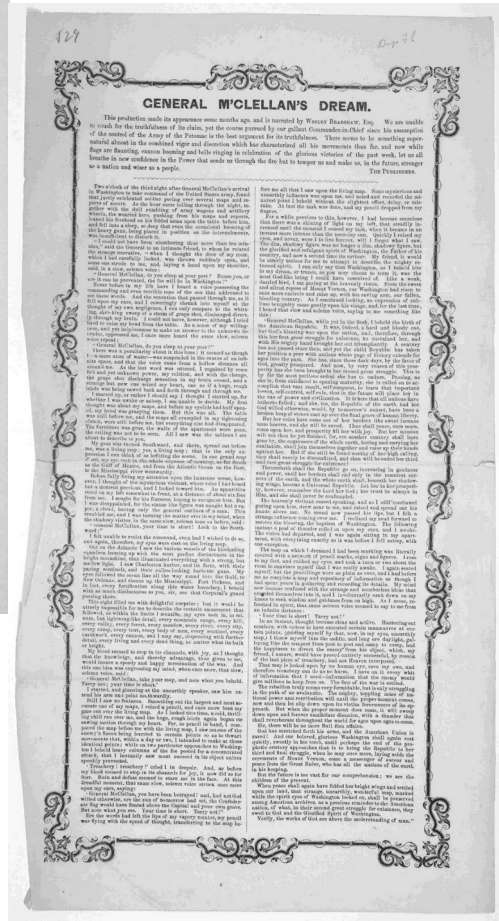
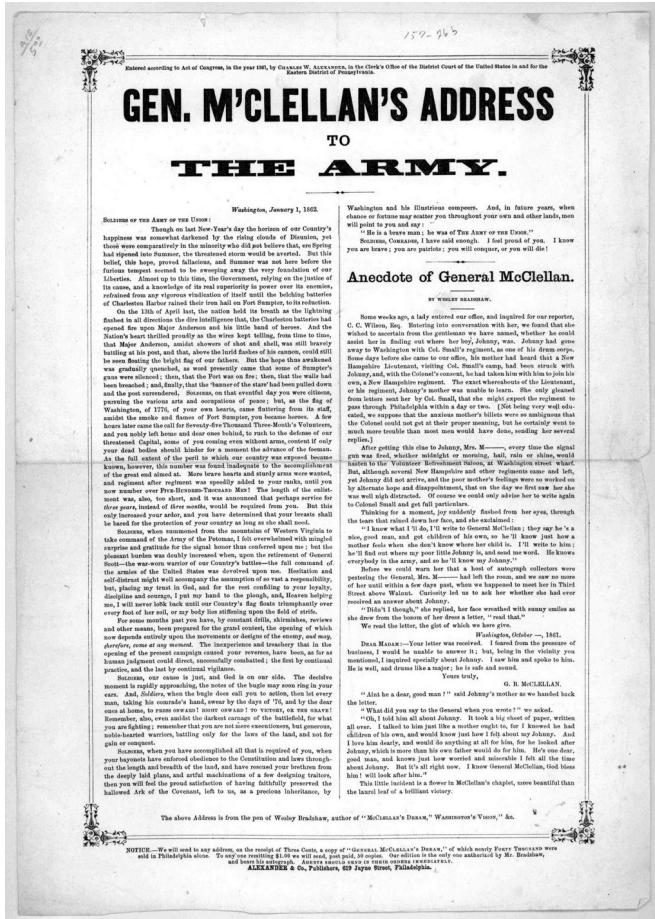
Second. To promote the interests and welfare of Volunteers, to instruct and entertain them, and to furnish them a medium of communication, not only with each other, but also with their friends at home. This feature alone will make THE CASKET indispensable alike in camp and at home. Each of its several departments will be under the control of a brilliant staff of writers, by whom all articles sent for publication by Volunteers or their friends will be attended to. And we earnestly request those, espe-

(The Soldier's Casket No. 1 January 1865 - Published as Charles Wesley Alexander [2])

In 1865, about 4 years after the publication of "*Washington's Vision*", likely owing to his increased fame from his coverage of the Civil War and his extraordinary stories, he began a publication called "*The Soldier's Casket*" [2], it was meant to be a large magazine with collections of Soldier's stories, with an entire staff devoted to examining submissions from American veterans. It appears that Wesley was attempting to scale up his operation of collecting and publishing unique stories from American soldiers.

Wesley also wrote transcriptions of public speeches that were put into congressional record, like that of the Union General McClellan when he was rallying the morale of his soldiers during the Civil War [3]. He also recorded the story of "McClellan's Dream" just before the battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862 [4]. Wesley's frequent praise of brave American soldiers and citizens consistently demonstrates his high esteem for his country. After examining the character and writing of Wesley under his ordinary name, and pen name alike, it becomes very difficult to dismiss the story of "*Washington's*

Vision" as a forgery. Wesley bears all of the marks of a credible and honest journalist, who just happened to collect particularly sensational first hand stories and folk tales. [5]



(McClellan's Address to the Army - C.W. Alexander and General McClellan's Dream - Wesley Bradshaw Esq.)

Not only does Wesley tell the story of "Washington's Vision" as if it were literal historical truth, but he claims to have learned this story from an "Anthony Sherman" in 1859; arguably among the last living Revolutionary War Veterans of that time. Concerning Wesley's earnest patriotism, and the general patriotic fervor of the Civil War era, it seems highly unlikely that a man like Wesley would publish a blatantly false story about George Washington, along with one of the last living Veterans of the

Revolutionary War. Slandering patriots of such high caliber in a public newspaper would undoubtedly be career suicide for anybody involved in publishing works related to American military history and current events, as Wesley was. It is very likely that Wesley recognized the possibility that he would be accused of slander, and thus chose to publish this remarkable story under a pen name to protect his public reputation as a credible journalist. Although this is arguably a point of conjecture, it becomes much more relevant as we begin to carefully examine the historical details pertaining to his controversial article about *“Washington’s Vision”* at Valley Forge.

It appears that Wesley chose to publish the story just as the Civil War was beginning to stir up into a full blown martial conflict in the spring of 1861. Formally, the Civil War was declared on April 15th, 1861; after Confederate soldiers forced a surrender of Union troops stationed at Fort Sumter. Abraham Lincoln issued a muster of 75,000 troops, signaling that there would be war in the future. The publication of *“Washington’s Vision”* in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was less than a month before “The First Battle of Bull Run”, which commenced on July 21st 1861. This began a series of large battles which previously had been relegated to smaller skirmishes whose casualties rarely exceeded 100 men on either side. The rest, as they say, is history. I offer these observations to frame the psychological sense of anxiety and uncertainty in the national consciousness at the time of the original publication. The result of the Civil War was completely unknown to everyone at the time of this article’s publication, and yet Wesley’s account accurately predicted the outcome in the segment concerning *“The Second Peril”*.

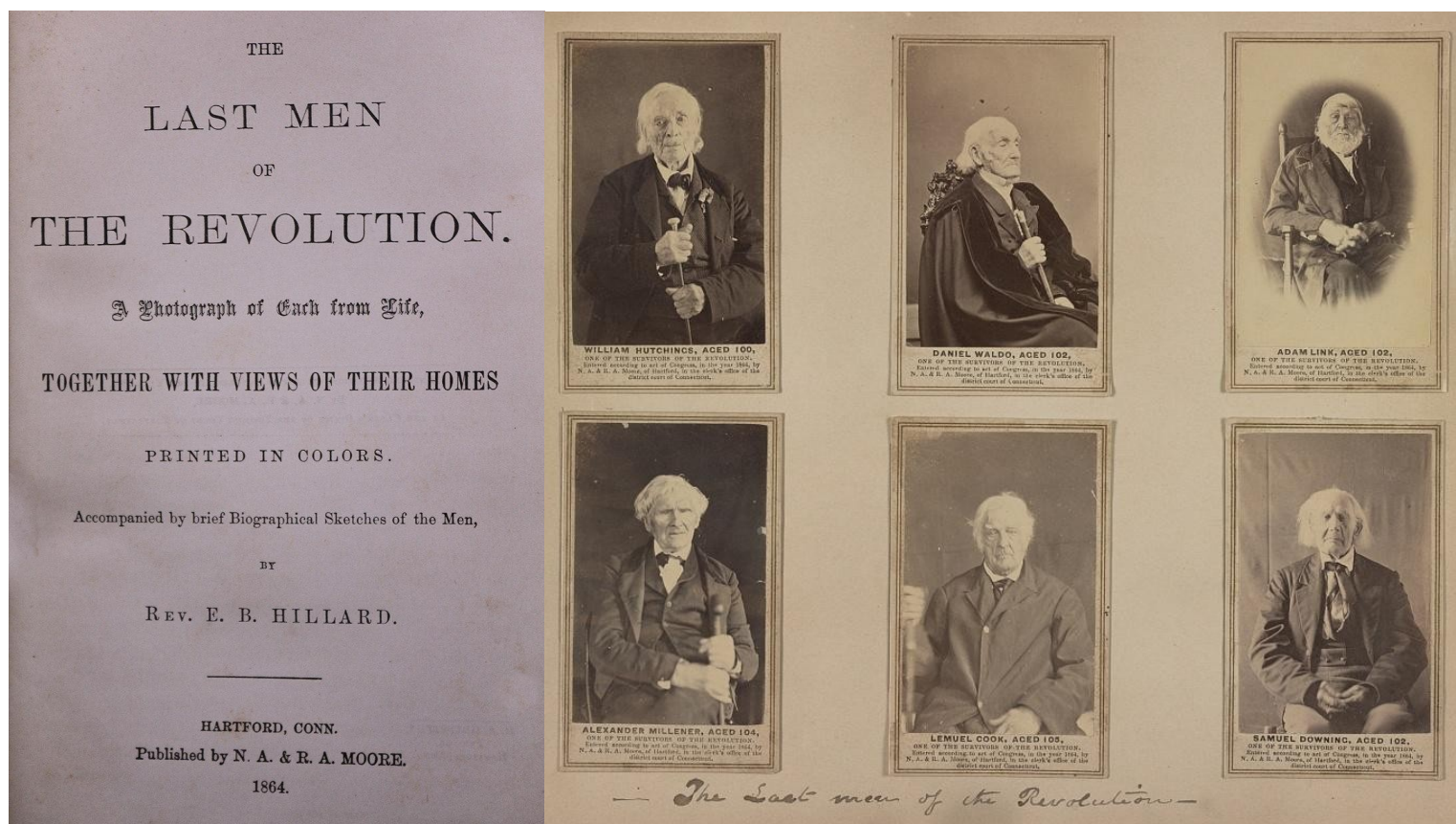
CONCERNING ANTHONY SHERMAN

According to the narrative, Wesley met with an old Revolutionary War veteran named Anthony Sherman in 1859 when he was told the story of *“Washington’s Vision”*. After looking for information on Sherman, I was fortunate enough to find two separate documents that can be used to verify his identity. The primary source that we have on Anthony Sherman is his military pension application (S.31957) [6], which is confirmed in the *“Daughters of the American Revolution”* (DAR) database [7]. His pension details all of his activities in the war, and even offers a birth and death date (1752-1849). Some who have examined the pension note that his birth and death dates do not align to the story told by Wesley, who has Sherman alive and telling the story of *“Washington’s Vision”* in 1859. This presents a difficulty in historically verifying this story, but there are some considerations we should make when looking at this discrepancy:

1. According to his pension papers, Anthony Sherman would have been about 23 years old when he enlisted with the militia on Long Island in 1775, and 107 years old in 1859.
2. According to Wesley's publication, Anthony Sherman would have been only 15 years old when he joined the militia in 1775, and 99 years old in 1859.
3. Some accounts also have Sherman pegged at 91 years of age in 1859, perhaps owing to a typographical ambiguity in the old-fashioned printing presses of the era. The archival copy of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* used in this article seems to have a typographical error over Sherman's age [1]. If accurate however, this would make Sherman 7 years old when he joined the Long Island militia in 1775. There are accounts of boys as young as ten years old serving in some capacity with the Militias [8].

Concerning his death, Sherman's pension documentation offers a date of 1849. There are no other public online resources that confirm or deny that date. It may however be the case that Anthony Sherman decided to stop collecting his Pension in 1849. If he was doing well for himself, the principled patriotic culture of that time might have compelled him to stop accepting government assistance after he had collected it for more than 10 years. It is also possible that Sherman lied about his age to appear older than he was at the time of enlistment to prevent congress from refusing to pay him. Secondly, it may be the case that Wesley Bradshaw adjusted the dates of when Sherman told him this story to something more recent to capture the attention of his audience. Thirdly, it may be the case that Anthony Sherman himself lived an unusually long life, if his pension documentation is accurate, Sherman would have been 107 years old in 1859 when he told the story of "*Washington's vision*" to Wesley Bradshaw.

In 1864, only 3 years after the publication of "*Washington's Vision*" a book titled "*The Last Men of the Revolution*" [9] was published listing the stories and photographs of various Revolutionary War veterans who had survived into their centennial years (100+). One gentleman named Daniel F. Bakeman, who wasn't listed in the book, had received a military pension until the age of 110 in 1869, 8 years after Wesley's publication of "*Washington's Vision*". Bakeman is regarded as the last Pensioner from the Revolutionary period [10]. It is very possible that Sherman himself was among the last Revolutionary War Pensioners, especially considering his youth somewhere between the ages of 07-23 when he joined the service in 1775, and his age ranging from 91 to 107 years when he allegedly told this story to Wesley Bradshaw in 1859.



(Cover and Portraits featured in "Last Men of the Revolution" - Reverend E.B. Hillard 1864 [\[9\]\[a\]](#))

Barring this discrepancy in his age, we actually have a secondary source of information that affirms that the Anthony Sherman described in pension document "S.31957" is in fact a real Revolutionary War veteran. In a book titled: "*The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut*" [\[11\]](#) there is an extensively detailed list of individual persons and their families who immigrated from Long Island, New York (NY) to East Haddam Connecticut (CT). There is a small but detailed paragraph that describes the travels of a "*SHERMAN ANTHONY, CORP.*":

"From Sag Harbor to East Haddam. On Sept. 5, 1776, with five in the family and goods, he was brought over by Capt. Joshua Griffeth. His claim was paid through Lt. Obadiah Havens. He served as Corp. and private in Col. Smith's Regt., and entered the Cont'l service."

(*"The Refugees of 1776..."* - Frederick Mather p.560 [\[11\]](#))

In the brief segment of text above, we are given a lot of very important information that verifies that the Anthony Sherman in pension document “S.31957” is telling the truth about his military service. The first point we will verify is that he was in fact a private under a “Colonel Smith”, Sherman’s pension reads as such:

“From the papers in the Revolutionary War pension claim S.31957, it appears that Anthony Sherman was born in Swansea, Massachusetts, September 13, 1752, and while residing at Sag Harbor, Suffolk County, New York, he enlisted and served as follows September 15, 1775, eight months in a company of minute men commanded by Captain David Pierson, New York troops.”

(Anthony Sherman’s Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

The pension then clarifies that Captain David Pierson’s NY unit was under a Col. Smith, corroborating the account given in *“The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut”*:

“David Pierson was the captain of the Second Southampton Company in Colonel Josiah Smith’s Suffolk County Minute Men Regiment.”

(Anthony Sherman’s Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

This text above confirms that Anthony Sherman served in the Revolutionary War, and that he lived near Sag Harbor on the eastern end of Long Island where he supposedly made his departure for East Haddam, Connecticut. According to Sherman’s pension documentation, he was present at the Battle of Long Island; otherwise known as the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, on August 27th 1776 under General Nathaniel Woodhull. This means that Sherman would have been in the Brooklyn Heights area during the battle of Long Island about 1 week prior to his departure from Sag Harbor on September 5th of 1776. This would give him about 7 days to travel about 100 miles from the west end of Long Island to his family in Sag Harbor. Here, Anthony Sherman would depart for East Haddam, CT on board a military vessel under the command of Captain Joshua Griffith. The following map illustrates a possible path of his travels:



(Google Earth Map of Long Island featuring significant locations)

We will here briefly summarize some of the historical happenings on Long Island during this time. The Battle of Long Island was understood as a contest over the strategic port of New York, Washington intended to defend the port by amassing his forces on Manhattan Island, and at the Brooklyn Heights region on the westerly end of Long Island. Despite Washington's intentions to defend and fortify this region to prevent British access to the Harbor, it was not long before the British had utilized their naval and numerical superiority to force a retreat of the American soldiers defending the Brooklyn Heights region of Long Island. It is here that Washington famously evacuated 9,000 troops under cover of night and fog without losing the life of a single soldier. This was done after a series of logistical defeats when it was determined that the Heights could no longer be defended. During the battle, Brigadier General Nathaniel Woodhull; commander of Sherman's Brigade, was killed in action. In Anthony Sherman's pension documentation, it is noted that an evacuation of Cattle and personnel occurred at this time to prevent them from falling into the hands of the British Army. Some of the cattle that couldn't be evacuated were shot by Pennsylvania Rifleman according to "*The Campaign of 1776 Around New York and Brooklyn*" [\[12\]](#).

We can now readily imagine the scene. After hearing news of the death of General Woodhull, and observing the chaotic retreat and *de facto* surrender of Long Island to the British Army, it is likely that Sherman's concerns shifted from the war to his own family's safety who lived in Sag Harbor. Traveling on foot, it would take about 6 or 7

days to traverse the nearly 100 mile stretch of land to reach Sag Harbor from The Brooklyn Heights where he was stationed. Owing to the state of general panic and retreat on the Island, it is possible Sherman may have acquired a horse or boat to accelerate his speed of travel, but even if he was traveling on foot at a leisurely pace for 8 hours per day, it is reasonable to assume that he would arrive at Sag Harbor before he and his family would escape by ship to East Haddam in Connecticut on September 5th.

Sherman's pension documentation further corroborates the brief snippet of text in *"Refugees of 1776"* in a lucid excerpt that clarifies beyond any shadow of a doubt that these two separate historical accounts are referencing the same person.

*"...that he was born in the town of Swenney in the State of Massachusetts on the 13th September 1752 that he has no record of his age but believes the above statement to be correct that he came to Sag Harbor when he was about 21 years of age and has lived there ever since except what time his family was in East Haddam during the war and at which time he was in the service that he lived in Sag Harbor when he first enlisted the service under Captain Pierson and also when he enlisted in the Continental Service under Capt. Davis and that he resided in East Haddam in Connecticut at the time he entered the service as a substitute for Griswold Fuller and Champion and deponent further declares that John Foster, David Hand and Sylvanus Halsey can certify as to his service in the revolution and that the Rev. John D. Gardiner and Nathan Fordham all of the town of Southampton County and State aforesaid can attest to my character for truth and veracity and deponent further declares that he relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present and declares that his name is not on the pension roll of any state. (Signed with his mark)
Anthony Sherman"*

(Anthony Sherman's Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

Sherman here appears to be very earnestly demonstrating that he is telling the truth, and offers references to persons who can attest to the truth of his statements. We also have a secondary source from *"The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut"* that confirms that an Anthony Sherman who served in the Revolutionary War was present at Sag Harbor, at a time where it would be logistically possible for him to be present there according to his pension documentation. In light of these corroborating historical documents, it becomes very difficult for skeptics to state that Anthony Sherman was not a real Revolutionary War veteran. Now that we have verified Anthony Sherman's identity, we will take the time to examine the historical circumstances during the winter of 1777 at Valley Forge to determine whether or not Sherman might be present there.

CONCERNING VALLEY FORGE AND THE WINTER OF 1777

Like many of the popular accounts of the winter of 1777 at Valley Forge, Sherman recalls it as a period of intense hardship in *"Washington's Vision"*. A point that is often overlooked, is that at this time the British Army had invaded Pennsylvania, and had captured Independence Hall, the seat of the constitutional government in Philadelphia. At this time, faith in the Congress, General Washington, and the Army, was at an all time low, and loyalists were certain that the rebellion would be summarily put down. Various American officers conspired to unseat George Washington as the Commander in Chief in the infamous Conway Cabal. The Congress failed to supply the army, causing mass desertion and medical difficulties, with casualties and injuries reaching into the thousands due to disease and frostbite. [13] All of this while the British were comfortably supplied by their Navy via the port of Philadelphia, their inland Loyalist allies, and non-violent Quakers who didn't want any trouble from the British Army [14]. It is within this psychological environment of general discouragement that Washington supposedly had his miraculous vision at Valley Forge in 1777.

During the Winter of 1777 at Valley Forge we are also given two particularly interesting stories of Washington being observed during prayer that were present in many of his biographies, and anecdotal accounts of the Revolution. One is the story of a Philadelphia Quaker known as "Reverend Potts" who stumbled upon Washington while he was praying alone in the forest.

"In the winter of '77, while Washington, with the American army, lay encamped at Valley Forge, a certain good old friend, of the respectable family and name of Potts, if I mistake not, had occasion to pass

through the woods near headquarters. Treading in his way along the venerable grove, suddenly he heard the sound of a human voice, which, as he advanced, increased on his ear; and at length became like the voice of one speaking much in earnest. As he approached the spot with a cautious step, whom should he behold, in a dark natural bower of ancient oaks, but the commander in chief of the American armies on his knees at prayer! Motionless with surprise, friend Potts continued on the place till the general, having ended his devotions, arose; and, with a countenance of angelic serenity, retired to headquarters. Friend Potts then went home, and on entering his parlour called out to his wife, " Sarah! my dear Sarah ! all's well ! all's well! George Washington will yet prevail!"

"What's the matter, Isaac?" replied she, "thee seems moved."

"...Thee knows that I always thought that the sword and the gospel were utterly inconsistent, and that no man could be a soldier and a Christian at the same time. But George Washington has this day convinced me of my mistake."

He then related what he had seen, and concluded with this prophetic remark--" If George Washington be not a man of God, I am greatly deceived--and still more shall I be deceived, if God do not, through him, work out a great salvation for America."

(Life of Washington - M.L. Weems p. 198 [\[15\]](#))

After observing Washington in prayer he renounced his pacifist disposition and took up the Revolutionary cause, inspired by Washington's reverent manner, and believing him chosen by providence to lead the Army. This was a substantial propaganda victory for the American Patriots who had troubled dealings with Pennsylvania Quakers who would often furnish aid to the British Army either out of fear or loyalty to them. Potts as an influential preacher would go on to spread his Patriotism amongst the Quakers.



(Paintings of Reverend Potts observing Washington in Prayer and Muhlenberg preaching to his congregation)

The second story is that of the French General Marquis de Lafayette, who was conversing with an American preacher and soldier named Peter Muhlenberg [\[16\]](#), famous for his role in the informal protestant conglomerate known as “The Black Robed Regiment” [\[17\]](#). While they were talking, Lafayette mentioned that Washington had acquired a new horse which was pastured in a nearby barn. Out of curiosity they made their way to see the horse. There, the two officers found Washington in prayer, and silently, removed themselves from the scene remarking to each other their high regard for their General. It is common for historians to dismiss these stories as fabrications, typically citing the notion that Washington was always an astute politician in matters of Religion, and largely avoided the invocation of formal Christian doctrine. That being stated, even a brief review of Washington’s private letters, journals, and formal proclamations, furnishes ample evidence that he was in fact a deeply Religious man. Both of these reports are historical references that corroborate Washington’s Religious disposition during this time.

CONCERNING ANTHONY SHERMAN'S PRESENCE AT VALLEY FORGE

In Wesley's telling of "*Washington's Vision*" Sherman offers a description of events at Valley Forge, recalling them from memory with the words: "*I remember it well*". Sherman and Wesley both are making it very clear that this is a real memory of Sherman's, and is told as if it is a historically credible account. One popular line of criticism against the credibility of this story is that some critics believe Sherman was not present at Valley Forge. The evidence they use to assert this point is by referencing Sherman's pension documentation. The reason provided by one critic is that Sherman was under the command of General Benedict Arnold, who was not present at Valley Forge [\[18\]](#).

*"...was attached to the northern army under the
Command of... Gen Arnold, was at the Battle of
Saratoga... does not Recollect at which time he was
discharged..."*

(Anthony Sherman's Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

Though Sherman served under Arnold at the Battle of Saratoga from September 19th - October 7th in 1777, this does not mean he was not present at Valley Forge the following winter. On the contrary, It is well understood by historians that Arnold was severely wounded at the Battle of Saratoga in his left leg. It was during the fighting on the 7th of October when Arnold was injured, and forced to temporarily retire from service on medical leave to the Albany military hospital located in New York [\[19\]](#). During the Battle of Saratoga, Arnold disobeyed his orders from General Gates and ordered a charge on British positions, the first commanding officer to support Arnold and meet him on the field was Col. Henry Beekman Livingston.



(Gen. Arnold wounded at Bemis Heights 1860 (left) and Battle of Saratoga - Harris Brisbane Dick 1933 (right))

"In the decisive battle of Bemis Heights [At the battle of Saratoga] on October 7, Colonel Livingston and his 4th New Yorkers were the first to follow the raging Arnold when he finally, and without orders or command, broke into the British entrenchments."

(Dangerfield, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, p.102 [\[20\]](#))

The statement above is sourced from the following correspondences between Henry B. Livingston, and his brother R.R. Livingston, a leading figure during the Revolution.

"Saratoga, October 14, 1777 "In the last engagement my regiment was the first that entered the enemies lines, and I believe I can safely affirm that I was the first man in there next to Gen'l Arnold who was on horseback."

(Dangerfield, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, p.467 [\[20\]](#))

According to Sherman's pension application, he was enrolled in the Army in the spring of '76 under Col. Livingston's 4th New York Regiment and later served in Arnold's unit:

"...spring of 1776, that he then enlisted in the Continental or Regular Army under Capt. John Davis and was attached to the regiment commanded by

*Col. Henry B. Livingston in Gen. George Clinton's
Brigade..."*

(Anthony Sherman's Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

So in summary, it appears that Henry B. Livingston was the first to reinforce Benedict Arnold and Anthony Sherman at the Battle of Saratoga, despite the fact that doing so meant disobeying direct orders from General Gates. After Arnold was wounded and no longer capable of field command, it would be reasonable that Sherman and other soldiers in Arnold's unit might continue their service under Livingston who demonstrated his ability to lead at Saratoga when he supported Arnold's unit in an unauthorized attack. This may also explain why Sherman did not recollect being discharged, and why he is not listed in Army rolls in the 4th NY Regiment under Livingston [\[6\]](#). Owing to Sherman's prior service under Livingston, and after seeing his courage at Saratoga, Sherman may have volunteered to serve in Livingston's unit. The gaps in Sherman's paper trail may be the result of Sherman choosing to serve in Livingston's unit without receiving orders to do so. Despite not being listed in the Army rolls of the 4th NY Regiment, Sherman's service in Livingston's unit is verified in his pension application which tells us that after his service to Benedict Arnold he was:

*"...again attached to the regiment commanded by
Col. Henry B. Livingston, served the Regiment in New
Jersey, was at the Battle of Monmouth Court House,
and by order of Col. Livingston got straw and set fire
to the Court House stairs by which means a number
of Hessians were taken prisoners was in the service
when peace was proclaimed..."*

(Anthony Sherman's Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

The significance of this is that Henry B. Livingston has a well documented presence at Valley Forge during the winter of '77 [\[21\]](#). If Sherman was under Livingston's command after Arnold was wounded at Saratoga, then Sherman would likely be at Valley Forge with Livingston. Below are written records of Livingston's presence at Valley Forge.

*"Valley Forge, December 24, 1777, complains of the
management of our commissaries, "who are
treading in the paths of our Quartermasters and
Forrage Masters who have already starved our*

Horses.” He adds that all the soldiers and officers are lousy, and that there is no liquor, no tea, no sugar, and no vegetables. “Poor Jack has been necessitated to make up his Blanket into a vest and Breaches. If I did not fear starving to death I would do the same.”

“Valley Forge, March 25, 1778: “We have a Prussian Lieutenant General (arrived in camp) and Knight of the Black Eagle which he wears made of lead tied to his button holes. He is an agreeable man about fifty-five and talks English pretty well, French and German as far as I am capable of judging very well....”

(Dangerfield, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, p.469-470 [\[20\]](#))

Henry B. Livingston’s disposition during the winter of 1777 is summarized as such:

“...throughout the terrible winter at Valley Forge, though he complained (as did everyone else) of the frightful conditions, he remained on the best of terms with his fellow sufferers: it was not the rigors of war to which he objected, it was the lack of social amenities. When the worst was over, he declared that he would stay only long enough to learn Baron Von Steuben’s New Discipline, “more agreeable to the dictates of Reason & Common Sense than any mode I have before seen”; he would then retire to his farm”

(Dangerfield, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, p.111 [\[20\]](#))

Although Henry B. Livingston was planning to retire to his farm after enduring the winter of 1777; he instead led an elite unit at the Battle of Monmouth on June 28, 1778.

*“In June 1778...”[Livingston’s 4th New York Regiment]
“...was placed in the main line of defense at the Battle of Monmouth. Livingston was detached to lead an ad hoc battalion of elite light infantry*

regiments formed by taking the best troops from across the various regiments."

(Wikipedia entry - Henry B. Livingston [\[21\]](#))

"Wayne's detachment of 1,000 picked men were in battalions under Colonel Henry Beekman Livingston, Colonel James Wesson, and Colonel Walter Stewart."

(Fatal Sunday - Lender & Stone p.189 [\[22\]](#))

If this is the case, Sherman's pension documentation is telling us that he was part of Livingston's elite unit when he: *"was at the Battle of Monmouth Court House, and by order of Col. Livingston got straw and set fire to the Court House stairs by which means a number of Hessians were taken prisoners"*. This also explains why Sherman is not listed in the rolls of Livingston's 4th New York Regiment in his pension documentation, because he served at Monmouth under a newly formed special unit of elite soldiers.

"The Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey, was fought on June 28, 1778. The First, Second, and Fourth New York Regiments were in this battle but Anthony's name does not appear on the rolls of either regiment."

(Anthony Sherman's Pension Papers [\[6\]](#))

Due to Sherman's likely presence in Livingston's elite unit, it becomes difficult to imagine that Sherman would have been a deserter who abandoned the army during the winter of 1777. It is also unlikely he would be assigned to this unit, unless he had been trained in the drilling methods of the Prussian Baron von Steuben who trained the army in drill during the winter of 1777 at Valley Forge. This is the same von Steuben whose training methods were praised by Livingston in correspondence with his brother Robert R. Livingston. Because Sherman was assigned to the newly formed elite unit under Livingston, it is natural to assume that he was in the good graces of his commanding officers preceding this battle, and familiar with the upgraded system of military discipline that was drilled at Valley Forge during the winter of '77. This information taken in context places Sherman exactly where he should be if he really did hear the story of *"Washington's Vision"* at Valley Forge as is claimed in Wesley's article.

THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS OF "WASHINGTON'S VISION"

One fascinating aspect of this story is how it begins with a number of historically verifiable details, and then quickly transforms into a Quasi-Religious narrative about the National destiny. If the account is wholly accurate, then Washington successfully predicted the outcome of the Revolutionary War, anticipated the Civil War, and predicted its outcome as well. Even if the story is an utter fabrication, it accurately predicted the result of the Civil War before it had come to pass. The peculiarity of these circumstances warrants consideration that *“Washington’s Vision”* may be a genuine historical account, detailing a visionary experience that General Washington had at Valley Forge in 1777. If this is the case, the text itself provides us several reasons to believe that this vision may have been the result of an altered state of consciousness.

1. A beautiful feminine form “appears” in his doorway, and only stares at him.
2. Washington had given strict orders not to be disturbed, if he was in the habit of consuming hallucinogens, it is likely that he would prefer to do so in privacy.
3. Reports of strange bodily sensations, and loss of motor control (inability to stand)
4. Washington gazes vacantly at this “being” unable to move or do anything.
5. The atmosphere was filled with “sensations” and “luminous”. A common theme in hallucinogenic drug reports is the vivid perception of color and light.
6. The “female visitor” becomes more “airy” and yet more “distinct” to his sight, it appears as if the visitor is very obviously a hallucination here.
7. Finally, there is the confrontation with death that is commonly reported in various literary forms that deal with hallucinogenic drug experience.

Though not typically suspected, it is not unreasonable to assume that Washington and other elite figures in the Revolution were involved in ritual consumption of naturally occurring hallucinogenic drugs specifically for Religious purposes. There are some reasons to believe that the Freemasons may have inherited an ancient European and Eastern Pagan tradition of consuming hallucinogenic mushrooms to induce visionary Religious experience [\[23\]](#). I will here focus briefly on three elements in Washington’s background that give us reason to believe that he was familiar with these plant drugs.

As a frontiersman interacting with natives, and as a gentleman engaging with secret societies like the Freemasons, it is in my view unlikely that Washington would have never come into contact with hallucinogenic drugs. He grew Tobacco and Hemp, and although there are no explicit references to him smoking hemp, there are reports that Washington smoked tobacco with Native Americans [\[24\]](#). During the winter of 1777, there are several reports of native Americans being present at Valley Forge, some of

which were under the command of General Marquis De Lafayette, a member of George Washington's inner circle at this time [25]. It is probable that various plant drugs would have been used by the natives at Valley Forge, whose customs and practices may have been known to Washington and select members of his inner circle.

The second item is the nature of colonial American iconography during the time of the Revolution. One of the primary symbols of American liberty, was a symbol called the "*The Liberty Cap*" by Americans, or "*Stipe and Pileus*" by the ancient Romans. In ancient Rome, it was the custom of a slave to wear a hat called a pileus after he had been set free. Statues of Gods or Goddesses such as the Roman "*Libertas*" with the the "*pileus*" hat on a spear called a "*stipe*" were symbols of a freed slave. The reason for this is very simple. The "*Pileus*", a conical cap placed on a spear or staff, was a very obvious way of symbolically signifying hallucinogenic mushrooms in Religious iconography. In American Iconography the "*Stipe and Pileus*" is commonly depicted with a Goddess of antiquity, as is the case in Benjamin Franklin's "*Libertas Americana*" medal [26][27][28].



(*"Libertas Americana"* - Benjamin Franklin 1783 [26])

Benjamin Franklin apparently devised the design of this medal with the help of "*Oriental Jones*" a British antiquary of the far east, and member of the world famous Royal Society [28]. Franklin wrote to him thanking him for his assistance as such:

"The engraving of my medal, which you know was projected before the peace, is but just finished... You will see that I have profited by some of your ideas, and adopted the mottoes you were so kind to furnish." [28]

On the reverse face of the coin, the text reads: *"NON SINE DIIS ANIMOSUS INFANS"* or *"The infant is not brave without the aide of the Gods."* The artistic relief is meant to portray America as the child, The Lion as European Monarchy, and the Ancient Goddess rendering aid unto the infant Nation. On the front is depicted the Roman Goddess *"Libertas"* bearing the *"stipe and pileus"*, a depiction resembling the *"Phrygian Cap"* or *"Liberty Cap"*, and a common hallucinogenic mushroom known as *"Psilocybe Semilanceata"* found in temperate climates like that of the American North East [29].



(Psilocybe Semilanceata "Liberty Cap" Mushrooms and antique figure wearing a Phrygian Cap)

In ancient Rome, the Mithraic mystery schools were associated with the symbol of the Phrygian cap, which bears a resemblance to hallucinogenic mushrooms. The Phrygian cap was an ancient near-eastern symbol of mushrooms. In the Mithraic Mystery schools of Rome, initiates would proceed through a series of ranks, consuming various hallucinogenic drugs as they progressed through the hierarchy. These ceremonies were held in underground chambers called *"Mithraea"* which typically held a sculpture of a man in a *"Liberty Cap"* sacrificing a bull.

“...by the time of Nero, there were already well-established Mithraic lodges in the city for him to... be initiated in what was called ‘magical dinners’. Earlier versions of the initiation lodges were already prevalent in Anatolia, traceable back to well before the sixth century. The lodges were small subterranean chambers... imitating a cave in which the hero Mithras slaughtered the Cosmic Bull, and the initiates, like Pythagoras, experienced a transcendent journey of the spirit to the rim of the universe. The lodges spread throughout the Empire in Europe, Britain, North Africa, and the Near East although rare in Greece since they already had similar rites associated with Perseus.” [30]

This was an elite fraternal society, similar to the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece, and was a means by which the lower levels of society could join the elite by cultivating relationships, and developing Religious insight through the use of hallucinogens. According to Carl Ruck, the majority of elite Roman figures preceding the Christian era of Rome were likely Mithraic initiates who would have attended the *“magical dinners”*.

“It indoctrinated most of the emperors, and the army and male bureaucrats who administered the Empire, until the conversion of Constantine, who was himself probably an initiate.” [30]

If this is the case, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Romanophilic American Founders were part of a similar fraternal society in the form of Freemasonry which inherited these ancient hallucinogenic drug traditions.



("The Rising Sun Armchair" - Made by Freemason John Folwell in 1779 [\[31\]](#)[\[32\]](#)[\[33\]](#))

The third and final item is referring to a chair crafted by a Freemason, that George Washington used while he presided over the Constitutional Convention of 1787: the Rising Sun Armchair [\[31\]](#)[\[32\]](#). The Rising Sun Armchair portrays what appears to be a very clear representation of the Psilocybe Semilanceata mushroom. Even the sun itself appears to resemble a cut mushroom cap with the gills facing towards the viewer. During the convention of 1787, Benjamin Franklin gave a comment specifically referencing the secret symbolism on the Rising Sun Armchair, when he famously said:

"I have often looked at that picture behind the president without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But now at length I have the

*happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting
sun.” [33]*

I believe this was a widely understood Free-Masonic occult symbol that was known to Franklin, Washington, and other Founders. This chair would have been on display at Independence Hall in 1859 when Sherman dictated *“Washington’s Vision”* to Wesley. Sherman referred to the chair when he mentioned: *“the old relics of our earlier days”*.

CONCLUSION

In closing, we have elucidated a number of reasons to believe that the story told by Anthony Sherman to C.W. Alexander (Wesley Bradshaw) may be a historical account. Wesley appears to be a generally credible journalist, though perhaps telling unique stories that were only read by the literary elite of his own time. Sherman appears to be telling a factual account in his pension documentation, that can be partially verified by the brief excerpt about him in *“Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut”*. A discrepancy remains as to his age, which is possible may be clarified by further research into this query. A detailed analysis of Sherman’s pension documentation reveals that he was likely under the command of Henry B. Livingston during the winter of 1777, and thus present at Valley Forge. As it concerns the vision itself, it appears probable that Washington’s Religious experience may have been caused by hallucinogenic drugs, as has been typical of pre-enlightenment civilizations. Washington’s familiarity with the pre-enlightenment traditions of Native Americans, and the esoteric occultism of the Freemasons, makes him a viable initiate into a secret drug cult during his own time. The consequences of this story are vast and far reaching, and are beyond the scope of this article. We hereby leave it to the reader to draw their own conclusions concerning the historical veracity; and thereby the contemporary ramifications of *“Washington’s Vision”*.

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